



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 1350.0 - Australian Economic Indicators, 1995

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### Feature Article - Employees and their Working Arrangements

Working Arrangements, Australia, (cat. no. 6342.0), published by the ABS last year, contains some results of a supplementary survey which was run in conjunction with the August 1993 Monthly Population Survey. The publication provides information on the working arrangements of Australian employees, including details of their use of flexible work hours, rostered days off, shift work and accumulation of extra work hours for later time off. Also included is information on their absences from work and the types of leave used. The following is a summary of the results of the survey.

#### Flexibility of work start and finish times

Some two-thirds of Australia's 6,323,400 employees in August 1993 had fixed times at which they started and finished work in their main job. Of these 4,156,300 persons, 833,000 had negotiated their start and finish times with their employer.

However, for 2,167,100 employees (34 per cent) start and finish times were not fixed, and of these persons 1,324,300 (21 per cent) had flexible working hours in that the start and finish times were variable on a daily basis (Diagram 1).

Male full-time employees had the greatest degree of flexibility in their start and finish times, with 24 per cent able to vary their start and finish times on a daily basis. In comparison, this level of flexibility was available to 18 per cent of male part-time employees, 19 per cent of female full-time employees and 17 per cent of female part-time employees.

The ability to vary start and finish times on a daily basis was greatest for Managers and administrators (54 per cent of males and 45 per cent of females), Professionals (40 per cent of males and 21 per cent of females) and Clerks (33 per cent of males and 27 per cent of females).

Public sector employees were more likely to be able to vary their start and finish times on a daily basis (27 per cent of males and 22 per cent of females) than private sector employees (22 per cent of males and 16 per cent of females).

Employees with children aged under twelve years were more likely to be able to vary their start and finish times on a daily basis (27 per cent of males and 23 per cent of females), than those without children aged under twelve years (22 per cent of males and 17 per cent of females).

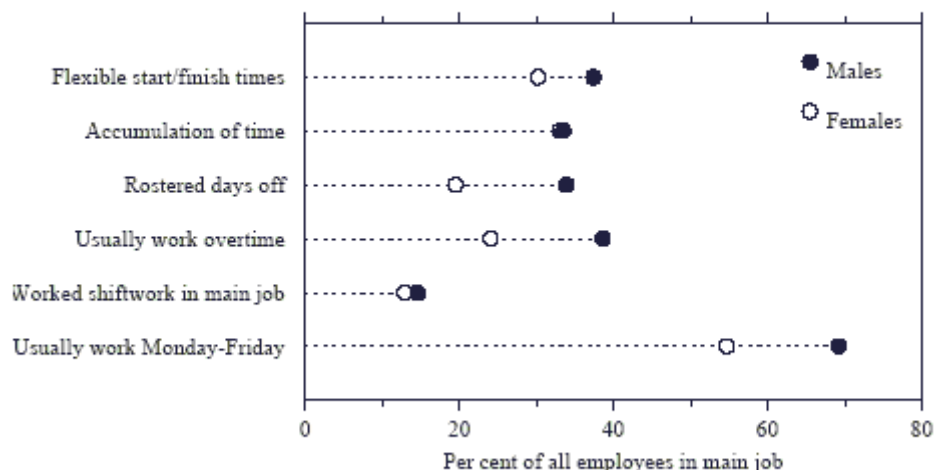
#### Accumulation of time credits

One-third of both male and female employees were able to work extra hours in order to take time off at a future date, that is they were able to accumulate time credits.

The proportion of full-time employees, whether permanent or casual, who could accumulate time credits was 36 per cent (35 per cent of males and 38 per cent of females).

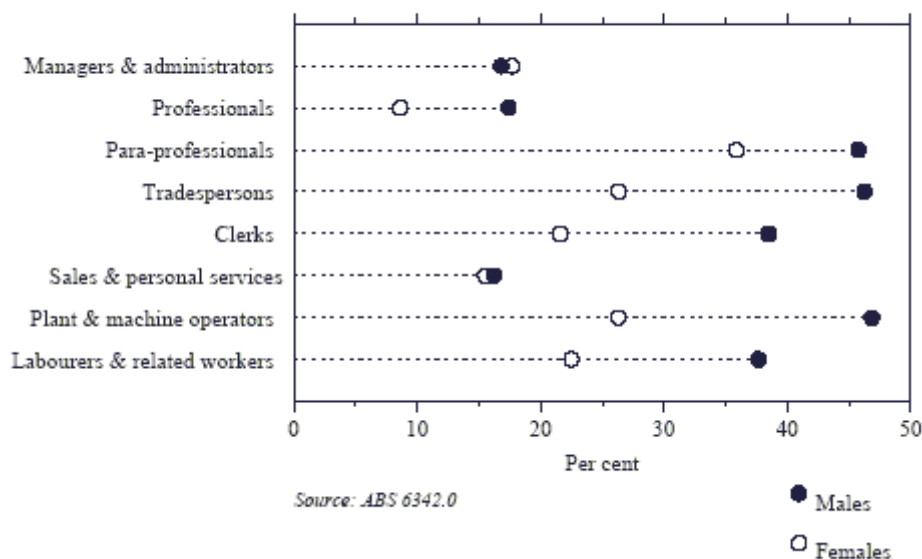
Part-time employees had less access to time credit accumulation, with only 24 per cent able to work extra hours in order to take time off. For part-time employees, the proportion able to accumulate time credits was higher for permanent employees (30 per cent of males and 36 per cent of females) than for casual employees (16 per cent of males and 20 per cent of females).

**DIAGRAM 1. PROPORTION OF ALL EMPLOYEES PARTICIPATING IN SELECTED WORKING ARRANGEMENTS, AUGUST 1993**



Source: ABS 6342.0

**DIAGRAM 2. PROPORTION OF EMPLOYEES ENTITLED TO A ROSTERED DAY OFF: OCCUPATION AND SEX, AUGUST 1993**



Source: ABS 6342.0

Managers and administrators and Clerks had greater opportunity to accumulate time credits; 44 per cent and 49 per cent respectively. Male professionals and para-professionals also had high proportions able to accumulate time credits (42 per cent and 40 per cent respectively), although females in these occupations had lower levels of entitlement (26 per cent and 29 per cent respectively).

### Rostered days off (RDOs)

Some 28 per cent (1,741,300) of employees had a rostered day off as part of their regular working arrangements in their main job (Diagram 1).

The proportion was higher for full-time employees (35 per cent or 1,676,300) than for part-time

employees, (4 per cent or 65,000).

Of the 1,193,900 males entitled to an RDO, 97 per cent were full-time permanent employees and of the 547,500 females entitled to an RDO, 89 per cent were full-time permanent employees.

The occupations with the highest proportions entitled to RDOs were Para-professionals (46 per cent of males, 36 per cent of females), Tradespersons (46 per cent of males, 26 per cent of females), Clerks (39 per cent of males, 22 per cent of females), Plant and machine operators and drivers (47 per cent of males, 26 per cent of females) and Labourers and related workers (38 per cent of males and 23 per cent of females) (Diagram 2).

Of the 1,741,300 persons entitled to an RDO, 1,119,900 persons (64 per cent) had some choice in which day they had their RDO.

Although females had a lower incidence of entitlement to an RDO, those that did have an RDO were more likely (74 per cent) than their male counterparts (60 per cent) to have a choice of days off. In particular, females aged between 20 and 34 were the most likely to be able to have some choice in when the RDO was taken (79 per cent).

Sixty-five per cent of males with an RDO entitlement came from the three manual occupation groups of Tradespersons, Plant and machine operators and drivers, and Labourers. For males, these occupations had a low level of choice of rostered days off (53 per cent, 47 per cent and 47 per cent respectively).

For females entitled to an RDO, 54 per cent worked in the occupations of Clerks and Salespersons and personal service workers, which had relatively high levels of choice in when the RDO was taken (82 per cent and 71 per cent respectively).

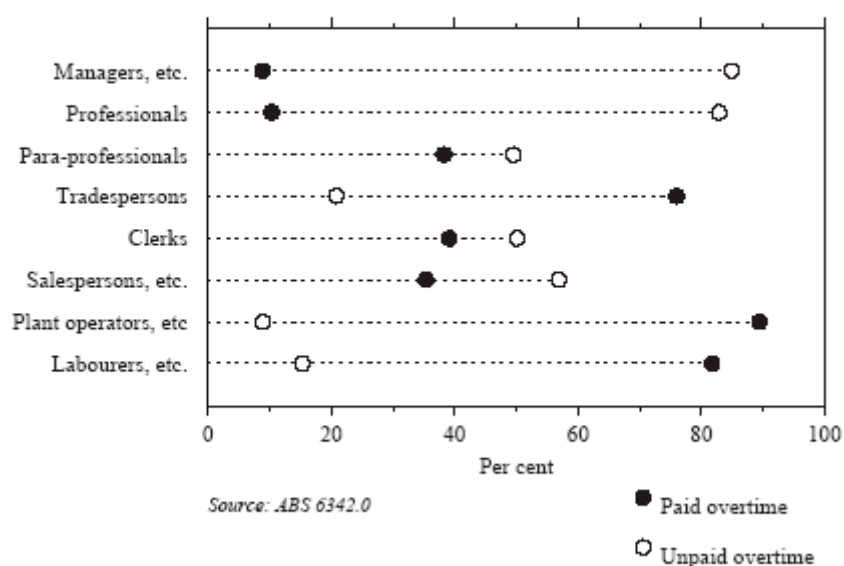
## **Overtime**

Overtime was worked on a regular basis by 2,030,500 employees, or 32 per cent of all employees. Males accounted for two-thirds of those working overtime, with 39 per cent of all male employees regularly working overtime, compared with 24 per cent of female employees (Diagram 1).

Some 40 per cent of full-time permanent employees worked overtime on a regular basis (43 per cent of males and 34 per cent of females) while a fairly high proportion of full-time casual employees also worked overtime regularly (31 per cent of males and 23 per cent of females). A far lower proportion of part-time employees worked overtime regularly (10 per cent).

Of those employees who worked overtime on a regular basis, over half (53 per cent) worked their most recent period as unpaid overtime. This proportion was higher for females (61 per cent) than for males (49 per cent). Some 45 per cent of males and 29 per cent of females were paid for their most recent period of overtime, and the remaining 5 per cent of males and 9 per cent of females had worked for time off in lieu or some other arrangements.

**DIAGRAM 3. PROPORTION OF EMPLOYEES WHO REGULARLY WORK OVERTIME: WHETHER MOST RECENT OVERTIME WAS PAID OR UNPAID AND OCCUPATION, AUGUST 1993**



Of those employees who were paid for their most recent period of overtime:

- 17 per cent (136,000) were paid normal time.
- 50 per cent (405,700) were paid time and a half.
- 12 per cent (101,100) were paid double time.

For the remainder, the overtime rate had varied, or they were paid by some other arrangements, such as a set overtime allowance (Diagram 3).

Most employees who worked overtime regularly, usually worked between 1 and 4 hours overtime per week (609,800, or 30 per cent), or between 5 and 9 hours overtime per week (634,400, or 31 per cent). A further 568,700 employees (28 per cent) usually worked between 10 and 19 hours overtime per week, and 217,700 (11 per cent) usually work 20 hours or more overtime per week.

## Shift work

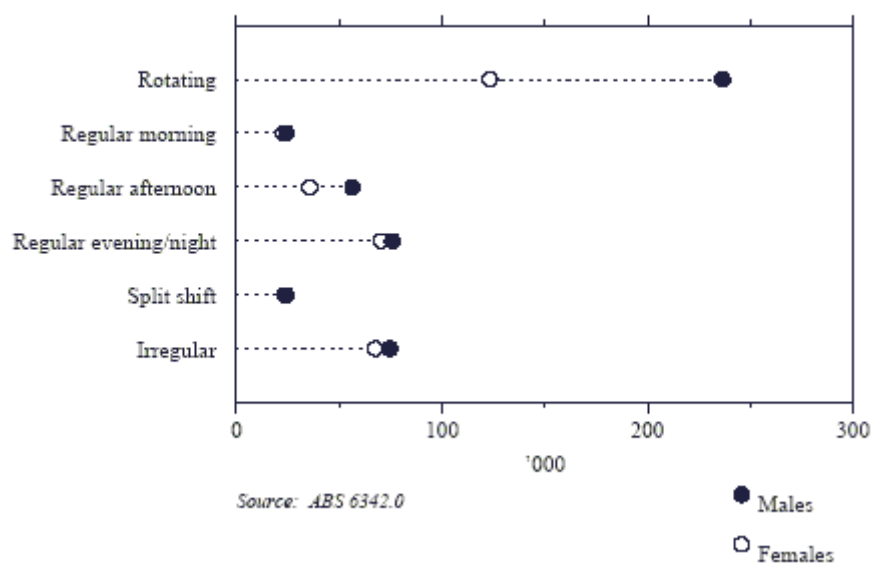
In the four weeks before the survey, 14 per cent of employees (876,400) had worked shift work. Some characteristics of shift workers were:

- 513,900 were males and 362,500 were females.
- 602,200 (69 per cent) were permanent full-time employees.
- 22 per cent were aged 15 to 24, 31 per cent were aged 25 to 34, 26 per cent were aged 35 to 44 and 21 per cent were aged 45 and over.
- Most shift workers were employees in the occupation groups Para-professionals (191,200 or 22 per cent) and Labourers and related workers (183,900 or 21 per cent).
- The industries in which most shift workers were employed were Community services (290,300 or 33 per cent) and Manufacturing (170,800 or 19 per cent).

The most common type of shift worked was a rotating shift, by 41 per cent (359,800) of shift workers. The next most common types of shifts worked were regular evening, night or graveyard shift (146,000 or 17 per cent), irregular shifts (142,300 or 16 per cent) and regular afternoon

shifts (92,000 or 9 per cent) (Diagram 4).

**DIAGRAM 4. EMPLOYEES WHO WORKED SHIFT WORK IN THE PREVIOUS 4 WEEKS: TYPE OF SHIFT WORKED AND SEX, AUGUST 1993**



## Weekly work patterns

Some 76 per cent (3,658,200) of full-time employees usually worked Monday to Friday in their main job. A further 12 per cent (571,400) of full-time employees usually worked weekdays and weekends, and 9 per cent (429,300) worked varying days each week.

Part-time employees had a variety of work patterns in their main job:

- 315,400 (21 per cent) usually worked on each of the days Monday to Friday.
- 483,300 (32 per cent) usually worked week days only (not including those that work Monday to Friday).
- 336,500 (22 per cent) worked varying days each week.
- 287,900 (19 per cent) usually worked a combination of weekdays and weekends.
- 109,000 (7 per cent) usually worked weekends only.

## Usual hours worked

Some 1,537,600 persons worked part-time hours in their main job. The majority of these persons (1,192,100) were female. The most common main reason given by females for working part-time hours were 'own choice' (24 per cent), 'standard work arrangements' (18 per cent), 'not enough work available' (15 per cent), 'childcare' (14 per cent) and 'attending an educational institution' (14 per cent).

Of the 345,500 males who worked part-time hours in their main job, the most common reasons were 'attending an educational institution' (34 per cent) and 'not enough work available' (24 per cent).

## Absences from work

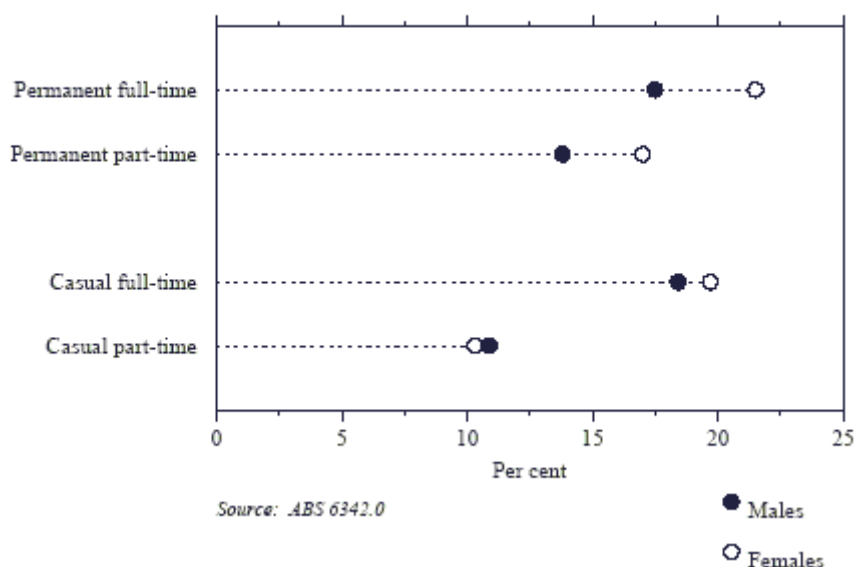
An estimated 1,094,900 employees (17 per cent) had had at least one absence from their main job of at least 3 hours duration in the two weeks prior to the survey.

Full-time employees, both permanent and casual, had a higher rate of absences (19 per cent)

than permanent part-time employees (17 per cent) and casual part-time employees (10 per cent).

For full-time employees, females had higher rates of absences than males (18 per cent of males and 21 per cent of females). This was also the case for permanent part-time employees (14 per cent of males and 17 per cent of females), whereas for casual part-time employees the rate of absences was similar for males and females (11 per cent of males and 10 per cent of females) (Diagram 5).

**DIAGRAM 5. EMPLOYEES WHO HAD AN ABSENCE FROM WORK  
DURING A TWO WEEK REFERENCE PERIOD, AUGUST 1993**



Of those who had been absent from work at some time in the previous two weeks:

- Most absences had been taken on sick leave (51 per cent) or holiday leave (25 per cent).
- The most common reasons given for the most recent absence were 'own ill health, physical disability or pregnancy' (532,600 or 49 per cent) and 'recreational purposes' (233,300 or 21 per cent).
- 74 per cent (814,600) of persons were on paid leave for their most recent absence from work.

Some 43 per cent of persons who had had an absence in the previous two weeks had been absent for one day, while 10 per cent were away from work for less than one full day. Another 15 per cent were away for 2 days and 18 per cent were away for 3 to 5 days. The remaining 14 per cent were away for over 5 days.

## Future surveys

The labour force supplementary surveys Working Arrangements and Absences from Work will be conducted again in August 1995. A summary of results from these surveys will be published in the monthly bulletin *The Labour Force, Australia* (cat. no. 6203.0). The data will also be made available through standard and special data services. For more information contact the ABS Telephone Enquiry Service on (06) 252 6627.

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